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ABSTRACT

The assumption that one person is trying to change another often makes the encounters between staff developers and teachers tenuous and delicate. The coordination and negotiation over role and status is seen in two different interactions. In the first encounter, between a staff developer and two teachers, the staff developer was the problem solver, attempting to achieve agreement on a solution to a disciplinary problem and maintaining control of the situation by doing most of the talking and giving explicit directions. The teachers reflected their positions as students or advice-seekers by taking notes. By fostering and building on a mutual understanding of their roles, the participants were able to accept a plan of action. In another situation, the staff developer met with a teacher who ostensibly wanted to talk about planning, but actually wanted job information. The teacher initially played "host", while the staff developer was a somewhat bored and passive "guest". The role of staff developer had to be reasserted to gain more control over the interaction. The staff developer gained control by interrupting the teacher, using body language, and by using the tag-question "right?". It is questionable if a trusting relationship was negotiated and to what degree the teacher was able to accept the staff developer's suggestions for change. For positive change to occur, all participants must understand their relative roles and the purpose of the situation. (FG)

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USING THE CONCEPT OF STATUS TO STUDY THE PROCESS OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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A staff developer is a person whose job is to facilitate, encourage, and promote positive change among teachers and administrators in school settings. It is an extraordinarily complex role because of the great variety of understandings, opinions, issues, and sensitivities about what positive change among teachers looks like, and how it can best be carried out. One way of looking at staff development and its inherent difficulties is to systematically study how the roles of staff developer and his/her clients are negotiated in face-to-face interaction. This is a bottom-up approach because it begins with a detailed analysis of interactions and eventually sheds light on the process of staff development. The uniqueness of this method is that it concentrates on the changing dynamics of the negotiations between all participants, and not just those inert characteristics of leadership style or techniques of the staff developer. The teachers who are the "clients" play a crucial role in what happens, how it happens, and if it happens.

All participants in a social system have a variety of statuses, or positions in the system, and roles, or ways of carrying out statuses. Some statuses are relatively static and unchanging because

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of strict societal rules of behavior. These usually involve non-reciprocal amounts of power and restricted ways of interacting (Shultz, 1975), as with a secretary in an office one visits infrequently. Other kinds of statuses are continually changing and developing greater latitude in the way participants may relate to each other. People decide which status is appropriate at any given time by making judgments about the setting, and the situation or occasion--the job on hand. "The main task to be accomplished at the beginning of an encounter in which two individuals are going to be engaged in face-to-face interaction, is that a definition of the situation must be reached" (Shultz, p. 24). The obviously involves a great deal of coordination, meshing, and synchronizing of two patterns of behavior (Argyle, 1969).

The relative success or failure of an interaction is dependent on the continual negotiation of common definitions of the situation as it changes throughout the course of an interaction. If the purpose of the interaction is to promote positive change, as in the case of staff development, then this continual coordination and negotiation is especially tenuous and delicate because of the basic assumption that one person is trying to change another. The idea of being changed or criticized, however constructively, can lead to a variety of defences, most of which inhibit or prevent the process.

This study presents an analysis of two different interactions between teachers and one staff developer. This person is a woman who

comes to the school in which the teachers work as a consultant for a week at a time. She comes about every six weeks, and has been coming for several years. However, this is one of the first times she has worked with these particular teachers in this setting because they are new to the school community. The common understanding in this school is that her job is to help the teachers and that she is generally considered to be effective. In both of these cases, the teachers have requested an appointment with her.

The concepts of status and role provide a useful way of analyzing the differences between the two interactions and the changes that occur through the course of each. Conceivably, there are several statuses available in interactions between a staff developer and teachers. Frequently a staff developer evaluates and the teachers are being evaluated. In this case the staff developer controls the key to upward mobility or other rewards of the school system, and the teachers are the aspirants of these rewards. In other cases, the staff developer may act as a teacher, problem-solver or seekers of advice. It is also possible that the teachers and a staff developer maintain the more equal statuses of colleagues or friends. The variable in these categories is the relative difference in authority or control of the participants. Statuses are reflected in how roles are carried out, which in turn are reflected in changing behaviors of the participants. The following is an analysis of <u>how</u> changing behaviors reflect role and status changes and the presence of lack of common understanding and definitions.

In the first interaction that was analyzed, with two women who team-teach, there was a clear understanding of the statuses and roles of these people--the staff developer was the problem-solver and the teachers had a problem. Shortly after the staff developer enters the teachers' classroom, sits down with them at a round table, and shuffles some papers, she asks directly, "What can I do for you?" One teacher responds, "I think we have a big concern with two students that are causing a lot of problems." She goes on to define and give examples of one child's deviant behavior during which time her team-mate overlaps and completes her statements and the staff developer listens. After less than one minute, the staff developer interjects with a question and then gives an example of when her own daughter was in a similar situation as this deviant child and the kind of pressure it created. Through the use of examples and references to similar problems at other schools, the staff developer agrees that the child's behavior is a real problem and not an unusual one. This serves to create more cohesiveness and solidarity between herself and the teachers. The teachers corroborate by listening actively as demonstrated in their body-posture and interjections of "umhmm".

The first time a solution to the problem is attempted by the staff developer, it is embedded in an agreement of the problem and is handled very tentatively. "I would, first of all . . . uh n-now in here . . . counsel, and change his behavior . . . with what he's doing in here." After the teachers and the staff developer agree

that their earlier attempts haven't given any results, the staff developer uses stronger and more explicit language in telling the teachers what to say and how to say it. "You have to start with one behavior that you can't tolerate. Eradicate that one first . . . For instance, if it's speaking out, and you wanna stop that say, 'Now everytime you speak out, I'm gonna put a line on the chalk board. When it gets to five . . .' he's isolated."

During the solution-giving phase of the conversation, the staff developer maintains a high degree of control by doing most of the talking and by giving direct and explicit directions to the teachers, and the two teachers reflect their position of students or advice-seekers by taking notes and writing down the steps to solving this problem. The staff developers uses strong language, but she manages to include the teachers into the solution by building solidarity in "developing the plan" and in passing on a sense of authority and control to the teachers in her modeling behavior. As a result, the teachers accept the plan as their own and don't express the feeling that they've "been told" what to do.

The status relationship between the staff developer and these two teachers remains that of the problem-solver and the problem-holder or teacher and student. The staff developer is always in control of the pace of the conversation and the topical changes. She does most of the talking throughout the conversation and the teachers reciprocate by listening actively, taking notes, and agreeing with the solutions. A "trusting relationship" (McDermott, 1977) is

established because of the amount of cohesion and solidarity that all the participants have managed to develop and maintain as a result of their common understandings of this situation. This allows the staff developer to give advice in a way that gets the message across in explicit, but non-threatening ways. The teachers leave the interaction with a definite plan to solve their problem and a strong sense that they have the confidence and authority to carry out a plan that has become their own. In a follow-up interview with the researcher, one of the two teachers said that this staff developer "was able to force us into the process without telling us what to do, and we did it."

In another interaction with a different teacher, there is not a common understanding or definition of the situation and the task of trying to coordinate this interaction is very difficult for both participants. The teacher has written down on his appointment sheet that he wants to discuss "planning" with the staff developer, but he confided to the researcher that he really has another agenda--he is trying to find an administrative job in the district and believe that the staff developer through her contacts and knowledge of the system can help him. Instead of acting like an advice-seeker or student, he tries to be a congenial host. He tries to get her to talk by asking open-ended questions to which she responds minimally, and tries to "entertain" her by using exaggerated gestures and voice in describing his successes with behavior management. "There're certain kids I've got to watch every minute. And as soon as they

move--it's 'NO!'" The staff developer listens politely, albeit passively, for close to a minute. At the time she starts looking around the classroom with broad sweeps of her head. The teacher responds by changing the topic to talking about the bulletin board she seems to be looking at. When her gaze shifts again, he stops in mid-sentence, pauses, and begins talking about planning. "Maybe you can tell me about this. I should ask you about this. Well. I put down on your sheet that I wanted to discuss planning. So I'll tell you something about planning." Even though the topic has changed to something one usually talks to staff developers about, the statuses have remained the same. The teacher is still playing "host" and the staff developer is a somewhat bored and passive "guest". Even when the teacher asks a question and the staff developer begins to answer, he cuts her off with a description of a great lesson he did that was completely unplanned.

In order for this staff developer to do her job, as she sees it, two things must change: the status relationships must change to something closer to problem-solver and problem-holder, and the staff developer must gain more control or dominance over the interaction. As of this point in the dialog, the teacher doesn't believe that he has a problem. He thinks that his best lessons are "completely unplanned". And of course, there is still the hidden agenda--his interest in upward mobility in the school district.

After more time passes, the staff developer begins exerting more effort to change the status relationships and gain more control

over the interaction. After she starts looking around the room which results in topical shifts, as described earlier, she begins interrupting the teacher and trying to gain the floor. She becomes more and more obvious in this attempt; by the fourth time she is speaking louder, her voice has greater expression, she starts using hand gestures, and she continues to speak even though he hasn't stopped or completed his sentence. At this point, she begins another technique to gain control over the interaction--she begins using the tag-question "right?" "Well, that's motivation, right?" "You have to get your plan down first of all, right?" "Your project could be put through your classroom, right?" In each case, agreement to these statements/questions is the most appropriate response. She uses this technique eight times in the next few minutes! In addition, she sits up straighter and leans forward with both arms on the table.

During the time that the staff developer is using this series of techniques, the teacher gradually begins to give up his control. His speech turns become shorter, he begins asking questions, and his gaze and body movements slow down and become more coordinated with hers. Finally, she says "Ohhh" with a rising voice; he responds by stopping in mid-sentence; she says "Well now, let me share with you" and gets ready to write; and he says "OK", rolls his shoulders forward, bringing his chest in, folding his hands together, looking directly and intently at her, and begins acting like a student who is being told what to do. She works at maintaining this status change to teacher-student, or problem-solver,

problem-holder, by continuing use of the tag-question, "right?", by qesturing with hand and arms, talking fast and expressively, and by softening strong directives such as "you have to" with positive reinforcement. "That's why you're improving each day and why you feel good about your teaching, isn't it?" The staff developer is doing more of the talking now and for the remainder of the interaction, and the teacher is actively listening.

In this interaction, cohesion and solidarity are long in coming. The teacher continues to justify his lack of planning and the staff developer continues telling him the importance of planning strategies. As he gets closer to agreement with her, more evidence of cohesion occurs--overlapping speech, laughing together, and positive reinforcement and encouragement from the staff developer.

Teacher: That's a real good suggestion. I li . . . I just have not focused on my plans. I'm so pleased with the fact that I do so much planning. I've never been quite so organized. I don't know why this is.

Staff developer: Doesn't it free you though now to talk a- to think about strategy?

Teacher: It does, yeah.

Staff developer: Sure.

These two examples of one staff developer in two different interactions show how changes in status throughout the course of the interaction affect how suggestions for improvement are made by the staff developer and how they are received by the teachers. In the first interaction, the two women had a clear idea of what one talks to this staff developer about and about what their status

relationship was with her. They defined their problem and weighed her suggestions for change according to everything they knew about the problem and their earlier attempts at solving the problem themselves. In the second interaction, due to a hidden agenda and no early agreement and understanding of their definition of this situation and their relative statuses, it took a long time on the part of both participants to remediate. The staff developer had to coerce the teacher into a subordinate relationship and they both had to do extensive repair work. It is questionable if a trusting relationship ever was negotiated and to what degree the teacher was able to accept the staff developer's suggestions for change. In order for positive change or learning to occur, all participants in the interaction must have a common understanding of their relative statuses and a common definition of the purpose of the situation, which leads to cohesiveness and trusting relationships through which learning and change can take place.

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